



U.S. House of Representatives
Office of Employee Assistance

SELF-CARE TIPS DURING HEIGHTENED SECURITY AND INCREASED ANXIETY

We all have our own ways of managing stress in our lives. The following are a few tips from the employee assistance staff that you might find useful. Pick two or three strategies that seem to work for you or try other strategies to help build your resiliency and enhance what you are already doing to cope.

- Know that increased anxiety and “stress” are *normal, healthy*, human reactions
- You may feel preoccupied, distracted at times
- Know, and use, the coping strategies that work best for you
- Changes to your appetite and sleep patterns are common during stressful periods
- Your reactions and moods may feel more intense than usual and may change frequently
- Understand that you may, or may not, experience anxiety during stressful times
- Develop a family emergency or communication plan as you would do for any situation
- Maintain perspective
- Listen to friends and family who need to talk
- Keep a healthy lifestyle – get some regular exercise, get plenty of rest, and eat right
- If you are a spiritual person, allow time for prayer and meditation
- Take joy in the small things in life
- Be aware of your surroundings as you continue with your normal daily activities
- Keep a journal, write down your thoughts and reactions
- Balance your need for current information and news updates with avoidance of watching unnecessary or redundant news broadcasts
- Realize that those around you are under stress as well
- Talk with your children and continue to reassure them that their fears and anxieties are normal and that their safety is your primary concern
- Take time to relax; do things that feel good to you (take a mini-break, garden, read, take a long hot shower, etc.)
- Check with others to see how they are doing
- Make as many daily decisions as possible to maintain a feeling of control over your life
- When needed, ask for help

As always, the employee assistance staff is available to House employees and family members to provide information, support and assistance as we manage through these, or any other stressful times in our lives. To speak with one of our employee assistance professionals or to schedule a confidential appointment, simply call the **Office of Employee Assistance at 202-225-2400**, or **TTY 202-226-0094**.

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Office of Employee Assistance
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GUIDE TO FAMILY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



United States Capitol Police

April 1, 2003

Preparing for Emergencies

Being prepared for emergencies in today's complex world presents greater challenges than ever before. This guide is designed to help prepare you for a range of possible emergencies. If you have specific questions concerning how to respond, you should contact your local office of emergency preparedness or the United States Capitol Police Command Center at (202) 224-0908.

Shelter In Place



In many instances staying at home may be your best option during an emergency affecting the local area. Depending upon the type and extent of the emergency, it could be some time before you are able to move freely around your community. You should be prepared to shelter in place for at least three days.

Prepare Your Emergency Kit

Gather the items you may need if you cannot leave your home for a few days:

- Water
- Non-perishable Food
- First aid Supplies
- Medications
- Battery-powered Radio (NOAA weather)
- Flashlight
- Cash/Traveler's Checks
- Seasonal Clothing
- Toiletry Items
- Special needs items, such as formula, diapers, and toys for children
- Important documents

If possible, keep your kit in a basement room that has no windows. If this is not possible, use a bathroom or walk-in closet on the lowest level of your residence. Periodically check the kit to ensure it is fully stocked and items, such as batteries, are fresh.

Prepare Your Home

Have basic emergency equipment (fire escape ladders for upstairs bedrooms, fire extinguishers, extra fuses, etc.) available. Learn how to turn off utilities (water, gas, and electricity). Also, know how to safely turn utilities back on. If you lose electrical power: turn off major appliances, keep your refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible, and turn off or unplug major appliances. Keep a flashlight nearby. During cold weather, select a single room that receives sunlight during the day where the entire family can stay. Wear layers of clothing during the day and use extra blankets or sleeping bags to stay warm at night. Do not use gas ovens, stovetops, or charcoal or propane gas grills to heat the home. Be prepared to evacuate should authorities advise you to move away from the area.



Prepare your Family

You should discuss what emergencies are most likely to happen and what to do in each case. It is important that all family members, including older children, know what you want them to do if there is an emergency. Keep it simple!

- Have a check-in plan. Knowing where all family members are and that they are safe will immediately help to reduce anxiety. Each family member should call home and check-in as soon as possible if a major incident occurs.
- Make sure family members carry contact numbers (cellular, home, and neighbor's phone numbers). Arrange with a friend, outside the state, to become a check-in point where everyone can call. It may be easier to get through to an out-of-state number.
- Make sure emergency numbers are posted next to every telephone.
- Teach children when and how to dial 911.
- Practice fire drills with the whole family. Have two routes from every room and an assembly location outside the house.
- If children are home alone when an emergency occurs, make sure they know what you want them to do -- call parents, go to a neighbor's house, etc.

Schools and Daycare

Know your child's school emergency response plan. Will the school keep children in place or send them home? If they intend to keep children, do they have food, water, and other necessities? Where do they plan to go if they must get away? If they plan to send children home, will they call parents first? Can your children get into your home if you are not there? Can the children take care of themselves until you get home? Can a neighbor take care of them until you get home?

Getting Away

An emergency situation may require you to leave your home. Develop a plan to evacuate your family.

- Plan in advance how you will assemble your family and anticipate where you may go.
- Prepare your home by turning off or unplugging major appliances, turn down the heat/air conditioning, and lock all windows and entrances.
- Identify a friend or relative you can go and stay with who is outside your community, region, and/or state.
- Prearrange several destinations in different directions, monitor your radio and adjust your travel plans as necessary.
- If you have time, call the friend or relative at your destination and let them know your plan.



- If you are not going to the friend or relative's home, use them as a contact and let them know your destination and when you expect to arrive.
- Keep at least ½ tank of gas in your car at all times.
- Become familiar with alternative routes – back roads may not be as busy as large highways.
- Roads may be jammed, so consider the use of other means of transportation (if available) to get out of metropolitan areas.
- Take your emergency preparedness kit with you.
- Lock your home.
- Take your pets with you and make sure you have food and water for them too.
- Have cash or travelers checks for gas and other essentials.
- Stay in touch with your family contacts and let them know your status and plans.

If an evacuation is not ordered, but you believe it may be the best course of action, get the facts first. You may inadvertently drive into the emergency or hazard area or you may find yourself on the road in a massive gridlock with thousands of others trying to evacuate.

Dealing with Special Emergencies

The threat of terrorism has increased the importance of knowing what to do in case of an emergency involving the dispersal of chemical, biological, or radiological agents.

Biological/Chemical Emergencies

In the event that harmful chemical and biological substances are released into the environment you could be exposed to them by inhaling them, swallowing contaminated food or water, or touching or coming into contact with contaminated items. Often, you cannot see or smell anything unusual. If a chemical or biological emergency does occur, act as quickly as possible to prevent or minimize your exposure to toxic substances.

- If you are inside and told to evacuate, leave immediately and follow the directions of security personnel.
- If directed, shelter in place or to go to a designated facility.
- You may be in the immediate vicinity of an incident and not realize the danger. If you see people vomiting, in convulsions, or acting disoriented, leave the area immediately -- turn around and leave the same way you came. If you are outside, check the wind direction and walk into the wind and away from the hazard area.
- If you believe you came in contact with any toxic substances, as soon as possible, you should remove your clothes and seal them in a plastic bag, shower or wash all exposed skin with soap and water, and seek medical attention.

Radiological Emergencies



There is a possibility that a terrorist group may attempt to explode a radiological dispersion device (“dirty bomb”) somewhere in the United States. A dirty bomb combines conventional explosives with radioactive material to produce an explosion that disperses the radioactive material. The main objective of a dirty bomb is to instill panic in a city where such a device is employed. If an explosion occurs, you will probably not know it is a dirty bomb until authorities make an announcement. If you are in the vicinity you should:

- Leave the immediate area.
- If you cannot leave the area go inside the nearest building. Staying inside will reduce your exposure to harmful radiation.
- If you believe there is radioactive material on you or your clothing, you should, as soon as possible, remove and seal your clothing in a plastic bag. Keep the sealed bag away from you. Take a shower and/or wash yourself with soap and water.
- Seek medical attention and provide the bag of clothes to medical personnel for testing to determine your level of radiation exposure.

Coping With Emergencies

In the midst of an emergency, it is important that you rely on your preparedness plans and listen to authorities that can give you the most up-to-date information and further provide for your safety. Once the immediate danger is over, you can then turn your attention to managing the impact of the emergency on you and your family. People react to emergencies in many different ways. Typical reactions may include: anger, restless sleep, nightmares, emotional numbness, the need to talk, loss of appetite, weight loss or gain, headaches, mood swings, and others.

When confronted with an emergency try these strategies:

- Try to maintain a well-balanced and healthy lifestyle
- Talk with family and friends.
- Reassure children they are safe and that their fears and anxiety are normal.
- Answer questions from your children simply and honestly and encourage them to express their feelings.
- Balance your need for news with overexposure to repetitive and disturbing images and stories.
- Reach out to others.
- Prepare yourself and your family before an emergency – if you have a plan, you will be better prepared to deal with the emergency.

For Further Assistance



U.S. Capitol Police: 202-224-0908

Local Police, Fire or Medical Emergency: 911

House Sergeant at Arms: 202-225-2456

U.S. Capitol Police Threat Assessment Section: 202-224-1495

Recorded message w/updates: 202-228-1725

U.S. Capitol Watch Commander: 202-224-0908